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AMERICAN THEISTS

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THE problem of the existence and nature of God, remote and oppressive though it is to some minds, to others is of all questions the most urgent and engaging. It has had its fascination for the mind of America, as for that of all intelligent peoples.

Among the outstanding names in American theism one of the first to attract the student is that of Theodore Parker (1810–1860), transcendentalist and theist.¹ His is a theological rather than a philosophical theism. Indeed for him theism meant *theology*, a reasonable theology as over against the rigid orthodoxy which he combats. He dwelt in that cosmically dim hour before the dawn of evolution, and argued for a minutely fore-known universe, of which God “knew perfectly all the actions, movements and history, at the moment of creation as well as today,”² and by his “infinite engineering brought them to pass without infringing upon freedom.” In his roseate theodicy God created man and nature “from a perfect motive, of perfect material, for a perfect purpose, and as perfect means to achieve that purpose.” He expunges the stigma of imperfection and evil from the present order by positing a future of unending bliss for every creature as well as for every man. Such assumptions mark the preacher rather than the philosopher. And yet there is in his *Sermons on Theism* (1853) a tide of conviction, a largeness of outlook, and a sense of ultimate values, which cannot be dismissed as mere sentiment. It is true that some of his arguments fall upon the modern mind with an undeniable antiquity of accent. They are as the idle wind which it respects not. But the sweep of his faith in a “Father-Mother” God, the breadth of his sympathy, the glow of his imagination, the strength of his conviction, still speak from his

¹ Professor Caldecott terms him “the most confident intuitionist I can find since Herbert.” *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 99.

² *Views of Religion*, p. 100.

highly-colored pages, as they did from his famous pulpit, with the power of permanent worth.

The year 1881 witnessed the publication of two volumes of exceptional character in the field of Theism, Diman's *The Theistic Argument* and Mulford's *The Republic of God*.

J. Lewis Diman, the author of *The Theistic Argument* was from 1864 until his death in 1881 Professor of History and Political Economy in Brown University. Before that time he had been in the Christian ministry, having spent two years in Germany, mainly engaged in the study of Kant. His interest in philosophy was life-long, and when in 1880 he was invited to deliver a course of lectures before the Lowell Institute on its foundation of Natural Religion, he found himself drawn to the subject of Theism.

The course opened with a discussion of the relativity of knowledge, in which the author concludes that "while we conceive that the Absolute cannot be known as the product of any inductive or deductive reasoning from the phenomena presented to the senses, we affirm that it is and can be known as the correlate which must be necessarily assumed to explain and account for those phenomena."³ He then presents in free and compact form the several classic arguments for the existence of God, throwing the whole burden of proof upon none of them, but treating them all as "but stages in a single rational process and parts of one comprehensive proof."⁴ The knowledge of God, he holds, grows with us as we grow. Nor is God a distant Being. "We know him simply and naturally as we know our fellow men."⁵

The part which intuition plays in this growing knowledge of God is described thus:

While we had no hesitation in rejecting intuition as an exclusive and immediate source of our belief in the divine existence, we recognize intuition as essential to the completeness of the theistic argument . . . as a part of cognition, as the final and legitimate step to which the intellectual process leads.⁶

The question arises whether intuition, as a cognitive act of the whole personality, does not also *initiate* the knowledge of God

³ *The Theistic Argument*, p. 64.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 317.

ratiocination serving to ratify and confirm that which intuition seizes.

Professor Diman's theism was supplemented and surpassed — at least in the extent of its influence — by the well-known author of *The Nation*, Elisha Mulford, in *The Republic of God*.⁷ He was the author of but two volumes, but these, the fruit of long study and reflection, gave him a deep and lasting influence upon American thought. *The Nation* (1870) — rewritten, Mr. H. E. Scudder states, seven times, beside subsequent alterations in correcting the proof — ⁸ has taken rank as one of the major treatises on the American theory of the state.

The Republic of God (1881) has an atmosphere of its own in American theological literature. After the tumult and shouting of the polemic period of theology it came with the elemental calm and persuasiveness of pure, rational conviction. It does not strive nor cry, neither does it argue nor dogmatize. Its stately and mature affirmations carry the weight of sincere and ripe reflection. It is the Fourth Gospel among American theologies. It grounds theism in consciousness, whence it cannot be dislodged.

The being of God is the precedent and the postulate of the thought of God. It is the ground in man of his conscious life. From the beginning, and with the growth of the human consciousness, there is the consciousness of the being of God, and of a relation to God.⁹

The chapter, "The Personality of God," did much to lift the conception of personality to its true level. "There is in personality," wrote Dr. Mulford, "the highest that is within the knowledge of man. It is the steepest summit toward which we move in our attainment. . . . The personality of God does not involve limitation. The only limitation is self-limitation — the limit which it sets in its own self-determination."¹⁰ Such

⁷ Elisha Mulford was born in Montrose, Pa., in 1833, and died in Cambridge, Mass. in 1885. Like Diman he was a student of philosophy. He graduated at Yale College, studied at Union and Andover Seminaries, and at Halle and Heidelberg Universities, was ordained as an Episcopal minister and served several parishes. In 1881 he removed to Cambridge and delivered courses of lectures on theology at the Episcopal Divinity School.

⁸ See his article on Elisha Mulford in the *Atlantic Monthly*, lvii, 362.

⁹ *Republic of God*, p. 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23 (first edition).

words have become familiar to us in the present century. But at the time, and in the fullness of the realization of their import in which they were written, they meant much. The discussion of the divine attributes also shows how far this emancipated thinker had risen above the conventional scholasticism of Protestant theology.

The impression which Mulford made upon American theology is comparable in some respects, though less in degree, to that of Maurice in England, by whom he was greatly influenced. One may readily detect the impact of Coleridge upon his thought and style. And yet there is nothing whatever of imitation, for upon every page one can discern freedom and originality of thought and expression.¹¹

Both Diman and Mulford wrote in the philosophic temper, and made contributions of value to theism, but neither presented what could be called an exhaustive treatment of the subject. This remained to be done by Professor Samuel Harris, whose sterling volume, *The Philosophical Basis of Theism* (1883), takes rank, as on the whole the leading American work on this subject. It is to be hoped that Yale University, mother of theologians, will sometime see that there is an adequate biography of this comprehensive and independent thinker, eminent among her great teachers, and regarded with admiration and gratitude by his students.¹²

The *Philosophical Basis of Theism* bears evidence of years of toil and reflection. It shows a thoroughly comprehensive and well-digested knowledge of the literature of philosophy, as well as a wide acquaintance with general literature. It is clear

¹¹ A biographical sketch of Dr. Mulford and his work, by Dr. T. T. Munger, may be found in *The Century Magazine*, xiii, 888.

¹² Samuel Harris came of a Maine family, and was born in East Machias, June 14, 1814. He graduated from Bowdoin College in 1833 and from Andover Theological Seminary in 1838. He was a Congregational pastor until 1855, when he became professor of Systematic Theology in Bangor Theological Seminary. In 1867 he was called to the presidency of Bowdoin College, and in 1871 became Dwight Professor of Systematic Theology in the Yale Divinity School, continuing in this office until he was made professor emeritus in 1896. His death occurred in 1899. His portrait, together with those of Dr. C. C. Everett, H. B. Smith, and other Maine theologians, may be found in an article by W. I. Cole, 'Maine in Literature,' *New England Magazine*, August 1890.

as well as profound in thought, and is written with an ease and a strength of sustained interest which are too rare in such treatises.

Starting with the assumption that if theism is to stand the test of rational criticism it must be grounded on a broad philosophical basis, Professor Harris introduces his work with a careful study of the nature and reality of knowledge. He bases the reliability of knowledge upon its self-evidencing character. Although admitting that "in human intelligence there is a nucleus of knowledge surrounded by a zone of probability, opinion and doubt,"¹³ he regards this nucleus as having the character of genuine knowledge, and hence as wholly trustworthy. In common with practically all apologetic writers of that period, he directs his criticism of Agnosticism against Herbert Spencer, its arch-proponent, who has served innumerable philosophers and theologians as a *pièce de résistance* by means of whom a new sense of confidence in the reliability of spiritual knowledge was gained.

Harris divides the acts and processes of knowing into three classes: Intuition, Representation, and Reflection. Intuition is immediate and self-evident knowledge. It exists in two forms Perception, or Presentative Intuition, and Rational Intuition. The former includes sense-perception and self-consciousness. It gives us the objects or particular realities about which we think. Rational Intuition is the immediate and self-evident knowledge of universal truths or principles. Representation is knowledge of a reality originally presented in intuition and now *re-presented* in a mental image or concept. Reflection or Thought is the reflex action of the intellect attending to the reality known in presentative intuition, and apprehending, differentiating, and integrating it (thesis, antithesis, synthesis) under the regulation of the principles known in rational intuitions, and concluding in a judgment.

On the surface this looks not a little like the Intuitionism of the Scotch school, supplemented by Hegelianism. But closer scrutiny reveals the difference. In his *Intuitions of the Mind*, McCosh wrote:

¹³ *Philosophical Basis of Theism*, p. 22.

Our intuitive convictions are thus not ideas, notions, judgments, formed apart from objects, but are in effect discoveries of something in objects or relating to them. . . . Intuitively the mind contemplates an event happening in time, and then by a further process arrives at the notion of time. The mind has not intuitively an idea of cause or causation in the abstract, but discovering a given effect, it looks for a specific cause.¹⁴

This is evidently far removed from Harris's epistemology. Indeed we have here all the difference between Idealism and Realism.

In his treatment of Rational Intuition, by which comes the knowledge of God, Professor Harris seeks first of all to establish the validity of Reason. He meets the objection that Reason breaks down in self-contradictions by showing that Kant's antinomies, rightly understood, are not contradictions, but opposite poles of bi-polar truth.¹⁵ They became contradictions for Kant "because of his phenomenalism; his antithesis of phenomenon and noumenon is so complete that they are reciprocally exclusive and therefore contradictory."¹⁶

Rational Intuition reveals five unchanging forms, under which (since the Universe is grounded in Reason) all existences may be subsumed: the True, the contrary of which is the Absurd; the Right, the contrary of which is the Wrong; the Perfect, the contrary of which is the Imperfect; the Good, the contrary of which is the Unworthy or Evil; the Absolute (or Unconditioned), the contrary of which is the Finite (or Conditioned). The first four are the norms or standards of Reason. The fifth, as the Unconditioned and All-conditioning, stands by itself and is the basis of Theology.¹⁷

Rational Intuition does not give the knowledge of Being but only of its unchanging forms. Knowledge of Being is given by Presentative Intuition:

The intuition that Absolute Being must exist presupposes the knowledge of beings. Beings are already known to exist; thus Reason sees that a Being that is absolute and unconditioned must exist.¹⁸ . . . The idea of God has content in consciousness through five ultimate ideas of the reason, and not as Kant holds, through the Practical Reason alone.¹⁹

This account of the forms of Rational Intuition is manifestly

¹⁴ Part I, Book i, Section iv.

¹⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 130.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 288.

open to criticism. The Good and the Perfect are too closely akin to admit of clear demarcation; the Perfect and the Absolute have too much in common to warrant separate classification. The present-day psychologist would doubtless belittle the whole attempt as having been rendered irrelevant by psychology. But the last word on that subject has not been spoken.

A discussion of Personality ensues upon the foregoing. Professor Harris defines personality thus: "A Person is a being conscious of self, subsisting in individuality and identity, and endowed with intuitive reason, rational sensibility and free-will."²⁰ The will is the person's power of self-determination. The determinations of the will are of two kinds, Choice and Volition. Man is *self-conditioning*. God alone is *self-existent* and independent, unconditioned and all-conditioning.

After an extended refutation of materialistic objections to the existence of personal beings (Chapter xvii), the author introduces a chapter on "The Two Systems of Nature and Personality," thus aligning himself with James Marsh and the Coleridgeans. His final emphasis is upon the existence of God as necessary to the trustworthiness of the human reason, the community of human knowledge, and the completeness of human thought, since it combines knowledge of all particulars in the unity of an all-comprehending system.²¹

The somewhat abstract character of this discussion was supplemented by Harris's companion volume, *The Self-Revelation of God* (1886), in which emphasis is laid upon the *experiential* nature of the knowledge of God. Revelation is here treated, not according to the older idea of an external *datum*, but as self-disclosure, such as Personality naturally makes of itself to others. In the case of the Supreme Person, revelation makes use of the structure and course of nature, the constitution and history of man, and redemption through Christ. The idea of God as Absolute Being is retained, but the predominant conception is that of Personal Spirit.

These two volumes, with a third, *God, the Creator and Lord of All* (1896), form an institute of Theism rarely equalled in

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 408.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 560, 561.

scope, balance, and sustained strength, and in the harmonizing of philosophical and theological thought.

In marked contrast with the voluminous Philosophical Theism of Professor Harris is the succinct and dramatic Cosmic Theism of John Fiske, who approached the subject from the angle of the scientist rather than that of the theologian or philosopher. The inclusion of John Fiske among the leading American theists may seem to be a case of a scientific Saul among the theological prophets. Whether his rôle were such or not, there can be little doubt that at a time when — owing to the materialistic interpretation of evolution — Christian theism in America was threatened with abandonment by a host of thoughtful minds, it was he more than any other writer, who turned back the tide.

An instructive experience, singularly characteristic of his time, fitted Mr. Fiske for this task. It may be traced with clearness in the pages of his biography.²² Branded as an infidel and skeptic by his minister, and virtually excommunicated as a boy from the orthodox church of Middletown, Conn., for having in his library volumes by Voltaire, Comte, Strauss, and John Stuart Mill; regarded for a time at Harvard College as a dangerous radical; his volume *Cosmic Evolution* greeted by the religious press as the work of an enemy of religion, Mr. Fiske knew what it meant to feel the full force of the *odium theologicum*. And yet he was neither embittered by it nor deflected from his course. Having become an admirer and apostle of Herbert Spencer in his student days, and continuing such after mature study and reflection, he became the leading exponent of the Spencerian philosophy in this country. Yet at one most vital point he found Spencer lacking, and so freely and frankly expressed his divergence as practically to repudiate the Spencerian Agnosticism. Spencer's religious attitude did not at all satisfy him. It is quite evident from several of Spencer's letters to Fiske published in Mr. Clark's volumes that Spencer had little or no interest in the religious aspects of evolution. In his acknowledgments of Fiske's writings and in his comments upon his utterances he habitually avoids the subject of religion;

²² John Fiske: *Life and Letters*. By John Spencer Clark. 2 vols. (1917).

but on one occasion, at the farewell dinner given him in New York on November 9, 1882, after Mr. Fiske's speech in response to the toast "The Doctrine of Evolution and Religion," he expressed himself as much pleased, and afterwards, wrote, "I wanted to say how successful and how important I thought was your presentation of the dual aspect, theological and ethical, of the Evolution doctrine."²³ Aside from this single indication of approval, Spencer apparently did not sympathize with Fiske's disposition to find religious significance in the evolution theory. Yet Fiske pursued his purpose. At a period when pretty much all of the theological, and most of the philosophical, world resounded with criticism and often with denunciation of Herbert Spencer and his agnosticism — a large part of it well directed — it was a signal achievement for Fiske, while supporting Spencer, to turn the findings of the evolution theory away from Agnosticism toward a theistic interpretation of the cosmos.

The chief deliverance of Mr. Fiske on the relation of evolution to religion is contained in two lectures given before the Concord School of Philosophy, *The Destiny of Man* (1884), and *The Idea of God as Affected by Modern Knowledge* (1885). If the Concord School had done nothing more than to call forth these two lectures its existence would have been more than justified.

The theism outlined in "The Idea of God" is very different from the "Anthropomorphic Theism" which Fiske criticized in his *Cosmic Philosophy*, and against which, under the caption of "Finite Theology," Theodore Parker had hurled his thunderbolts. And yet Fiske advanced a very definite and positive teleology, which recognizes that "there is a reasonableness in the universe such as to indicate that the Infinite Power of which it is the multiform manifestation is psychical."²⁴ Remaining loyal to Spencer and averring that his characterization of God as "Unknowable" presents "only one aspect of Deity,"²⁵ Fiske managed to transform the dreaded shadow of evolution into an angel of light.

²³ *Op. cit.*, ii, 264.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xxx.

²⁴ *The Idea of God*, Preface, p. xxix.

The argument for the existence of God which he advances is the design argument, reconstructed upon the lines of the evolutionary hypothesis:

The events of the universe are not the work of chance, neither are they the outcome of blind necessity. Practically there is a purpose in the world whereof it is our highest duty to learn the lesson, however well or ill we may fail in rendering a scientific account of it. When from the dawn of life we see all things working together toward the evolution of the highest spiritual attributes of Man, we know, however the words may stumble in which we try to say it, that God is in the deepest sense a Moral Being. The everlasting source of phenomena is none other than the infinite Power that makes for righteousness.²⁶

The presentation is impaired by a tone of assurance, not to say dogmatism, as of one speaking from a new seat of authority. Its somewhat dramatic form admits also some rather sweeping doctrinal generalizations, as Professor George Harris indicated in his review of the volume in the *Andover Review*.²⁷ Moreover, as the same critic also pointed out, its sole reliance upon teleology affords a quite inadequate basis for a sufficient theism. And yet, with all its assumptions and omissions, this skilful etching of "a well-marked dramatic tendency toward the *dé-nouement* of which everyone of the myriad little acts of life and death during the entire series of geologic aeons was assisting" ²⁸ constituted a unique and brilliant contribution to American thought. Without it our theistic literature would be not only far duller but far less advanced.

Mr. Fiske was not a profound thinker nor a man of marked religious sentiment, but he had an exceptionally sane, reverent, and forceful mind, and the fact that as the leading exponent of evolution in America he threw his judgment unhesitatingly on the side of theism carried a great deal of weight at a time when there was much mental confusion and disturbance. The *Idea of God* has gone through fifteen editions, and will not cease to be read for many years to come.

It is worthy of note that in his *Interpretation of Nature* (1893) Professor N. S. Shaler took an attitude toward evolution similar to that of Fiske. In a recent volume, *The Order of Nature*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 166, 167.

²⁸ *The Idea of God*, p. 161.

²⁷ Vol. v, pp. 98-102.

(1917), Professor Lawrence J. Henderson also finds indications in nature of an evolutionary teleology, though with a far greater reserve than either Fiske or Shaler. He writes as follows:

Nothing more remains than to admit that the riddle surpasses us and to conclude that the contrast of mechanism with teleology is the very foundation of the order of nature, which must ever be regarded from two complementary points of view, as a vast assemblage of changing systems, and as an harmonious unity of changeless laws and qualities working together in the process of evolution.²⁹

We meet with a similar faith in the theistic implications of the developmental theory, but with a contrasted point of view and method, in the theist whose work we are next to consider, Charles Carroll Everett, the publication of whose theological lectures under the title *Theism and the Christian Faith* (1909) added a contribution of large and permanent value to the literature of Theism.³⁰

Doctor Everett's long and fruitful term of service as professor of Theology in the Harvard Divinity School (1869-1900) ran parallel with that of Samuel Harris at Yale.³¹ The two teachers were alike in their philosophic vision, wide knowledge of philosophy and literature, penetration of mind, and skill and charm of expression. They were alike also in their faith in intuition and in idealism. Yet they differed in their types of idealism. Harris was more the Kantian, Everett the Hegelian, although neither of them was in any sense a camp-follower, but each an independent thinker.

If anyone imagines that it is impossible to find a course of lectures in theology that is at once free, profound, and engaging, he may be disillusioned by looking into Professor Everett's course as reported and edited by the Reverend Edward Hale.

²⁹ Page 209.

³⁰ Dean W. W. Fenn of the Harvard Divinity Faculty has made a valuable summary and evaluation of Professor Everett's theology in *The Harvard Theological Review*, vol. iii, 1-23.

³¹ Charles Carroll Everett was born in Brunswick, Me., June 19, 1829. He graduated from Bowdoin College, and studied at Berlin University, Germany. He was librarian of Bowdoin College Library for five years, and professor of Modern Languages, 1855-57. In 1869 he joined the faculty of Harvard Divinity School and from 1879 until his death in 1900 was Dean of the School.

Here is no dry-as-dust dogmatism, but life, movement, literature. Dr. Everett was accustomed to begin his course of lectures with the following definition of religion, to be found in his volume, *The Psychological Elements of Religious Faith* (1902): "Religion is a feeling toward a Supernatural Presence manifesting itself in Truth, Goodness and Beauty." This definition he traced through six phases of development, beginning with the simple "feeling" of primitive religion and culminating in "feeling toward a spiritual presence, manifesting itself in Truth, Goodness and Beauty, especially as illustrated in the life and teaching of Jesus and as experienced in every soul that is open to its influence."³² These three — Truth (or Unity), Goodness, and Beauty — in harmony with Plato, he presents as the three Ideas of Reason and the guides to the knowledge of God. Unity he finds existent in three forms: Unity in time, or Eternity; Unity in space, or Omnipresence; and Dynamic Unity, or Omnipotence. Thus we have, in place of Harris' *five* forms of Reason, Everett's *three* forms, with a somewhat differing content, although there is a fundamental agreement between them.

In making Truth coincident with Unity, Dr. Everett adopts a norm which in spite of its inclusiveness limits him. Unity is a fundamental quality of truth, but when made supreme it forces into the background that which has become the chief quest of contemporary philosophy, Reality. With so exclusive an emphasis upon Unity he naturally became enmeshed in the web of Hegelianism. It is true that he rejected an abstract unity as applied to God in favor of a "concrete unity in which the parts are not done away with but taken up into the whole";³³ and yet there is wanting a certain sense of personality which is not to be had when Unity is made the supreme category. The supremacy of the category of Unity tends to subordinate goodness, or moral truth, to theoretical truth. Along with this goes also the disposition to minimize evil which the Hegelian finds it so hard to avoid. It does not remedy the situation to make sin a factor in the "negative

³² See W. W. Fenn, *l. c.*, p. 20.

³³ *Theism and the Christian Faith*, p. 51.

movement" by which man is brought into conflict with his environment, as Everett does. This offers too negative an account of sin. It is not enough to define sin as "a state of inertia, the resting in some lower plane of life, where it is possible to rise to a higher."³⁴ It is that — and more.

Christianity is truly presented by Everett as the religion of reconciliation; yet Christianity is not so much concerned to reconcile good and evil as to reconcile the *Author* of good and the *sinner*. In other words, persons, rather than their products, are the true objects of reconciliation.

Especial emphasis is laid by Everett upon the idea of Beauty in theism, which he rightly contends, "has been too much left out of account by many theologians." Beauty is defined as "the manifestation of the glory of God";³⁵ which glory is "the self-manifestation of the divine nature regarded as the sum of all ideals." Such self-manifestation, he points out, necessarily excludes abstract unity and all forms of pantheism. "When the divine nature is conceived merely as abstract unity there can be, of course, no self-manifestation, no outpouring of the divine nature, no glory of God."³⁶ Man glorifies God by self-fulfilment, by means of which he fills his place in the universe. His description of the Divine Glory and Blessedness as consisting in Active Love³⁷ reminds the reader of Jonathan Edwards. Here, at least, the Berkeleyan Calvinist and the Hegelian Unitarian are in striking harmony, both in spirit and in idea.

While the emphasis upon Divine Personality is less marked in the theism of Everett than in that of Harris, the ruling idea of God is the same, that of Spiritual Presence; and that means Personality. At the same time Divine Personality, in Everett's thought, is more or less shadowed by the conception of the Absolute. In elevating Idea above Reality, Hegelianism — even in such a modification of it as this — inevitably veils the realization of God behind the thought of God. If knowledge is confined to *ideas*, the idea of God, as Everett recognizes at the outset of his discussion, is necessarily a rep-

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, chap. vii.

resentation, a *Vorstellung*, but if knowledge is *not* confined to ideas, if it is recognized as deeper and fuller than ideas, using them only as its instruments, then it is possible to have a knowledge of God that is far more than a *Vorstellung*. The knowledge by personal beings of one another can hardly be confined to representation. Whatever its ultimate nature, it would seem to be primarily presentative and only secondarily representative. In relating itself to other aspects of knowledge and other forms of reality, the knowledge of God is doubtless representative, indirect, mediate; but in itself is it not more direct and experiential than Professor Everett conceived it to be?

A number of other noteworthy books on theism by American authors have appeared, among which may be mentioned: *A Theodicy* (1859), by Albert Taylor Bledsoe, at that time Professor of Mathematics and Astronomy in the University of Missouri; *The Theistic Conception of God* (1875), by B. F. Cocker, professor of Mental and Moral Philosophy in the University of Michigan; Borden P. Bowne's *Philosophy of Theism* (1888);³⁸ George P. Fisher's *Grounds of Theistic and Christian Belief* (1902); Josiah Royce's and George H. Howison's *The Conception of God* (1897);³⁹ William N. Clarke's *The Christian Doctrine of God* (1909); Richard Wilde Micou's *Basic Ideas in Religion* (1916); George A. Gordon's *Aspects of the Infinite Mystery* (1916).⁴⁰

A contribution to the literature of theism of marked value appeared in the year 1890 entitled *Belief in God* (Winkley Lectures at Andover Theological Seminary), by President Jacob Gould Schurman, at that time Sage professor of Philosophy at Cornell University. As a condensed and succinct statement of the grounds of theism it is in many respects unrivalled. President Schurman entitles his Theism *anthropocosmic*, since it is based on the double facts of the cosmos and human nature. From a study of the implications underlying the totality of

³⁸ See *The Personalist*, vol. i, No. 1, pp. 27 ff. Professor Borden P. Bowne's *Theism* and *Personalism* have been omitted from this discussion for the reason that I hope to discuss them at length in a volume upon *American Philosophy*.

³⁹ See *The Harvard Theological Review*, viii (1915), 219-237.

⁴⁰ See *Progressive Religious Life in America*, chap. iii.

phenomena he reaches the conclusion that "the ground or immanent cause of the universe must be an Infinite Spirit." This Spirit, interpreted through personality, is Love. It would be difficult to find a finer interpretation of Christianity as it is seen in the light of a rational philosophy than President Schurman presents in his closing chapter, "Belief in God as Father of Spirits," from which the following passage is taken:

Nothing requires us then to modify the conclusion already reached that love is the complete expression of the moral character of God. This also is the burden of the revelation through Christ as it is the one imperishable idea of every form of the Christian faith. I believe, therefore, that it is to the religion of Christ, as the absolute religion, that we shall find ourselves approximating, the deeper our soundings in the soul of man and of nature. But that religion is not to be confounded with any rigid and unprogressive creed that claims, in a formidable array of ancient articles, a monopoly of Christian truth. Not merely do we need, what Locke so earnestly demanded, a broadening of the bottom of religion; we need also a recognition of its constant progressiveness. For our knowledge of God must continue to grow with our knowledge of humanity and nature through which alone he reveals himself. The endless problem of religious thought will therefore be the re-setting of the religion of Christ in the framework of contemporary knowledge.⁴¹

In connection with this volume should be mentioned Professor Arthur Kenyon Rogers' ⁴² *The Religious Conception of God* (1907), in which the author defends "a view of the world which is frankly religious and theistic."⁴³ Professor Rogers deliberately adopts this view in preference to "the attitude of disinterested spectator" in which the philosopher "assumes a position outside the world's life and makes it simply a subject on which to exercise one's skill in dialectic."⁴⁴

It is impossible to glance over even so limited a sector of the history of Theism without realizing that it is in its very nature a progressive science. The idea of God, as well as the experience of God, develops and deepens and expands with the growing mind of man. Such has been the case in American thought.

⁴¹ *Belief in God*, pp. 260, 261.

⁴² At the time this volume was published, Doctor Rogers was professor of Philosophy in Butler College. Since 1918 he has been professor of Philosophy in Yale University.

⁴³ Page 1.

⁴⁴ Page 3.

It is true that many minds refuse with no little heat to accept this alternative; the idea of God for them is a fixed and unchangeable *datum*. It is easy to fall into the assumption that here knowledge has reached the limit of its possibilities. What more can be learned of God than the fundamental truths of his "nature and government" as disclosed in the laws of the mind itself, in nature, and in "revelation"? So it seemed to the scholasticism of the Middle Ages and again to the divines of the Lutheran and Reformed churches. But this proved a misconception. *Stability* in the idea of God does not mean fixity. There is no fixity of idea in such a realm as this, representing as it does the highest and widest of our concepts. It is, to be sure, difficult to see in what direction so ultimate an idea as that of God can farther expand. No age can see how the next can possibly advance further; but the advance comes, taking up into itself the best that has gone before, and carrying enlarged experience on into enlarging idea.